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AUTHOR Taffee, Stephen J.
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ABSTRACT

Decisions about what a teacher finds to be acceptable classroom behavior vs. unacceptable classroom behavior are value decisions. Unless a teacher has identified and delineated personal beliefs, attitudes, and feelings about discipline, and shaped them into a system of responses which are consistent with his or her personal teaching style, a variety of behavioral problems are likely to occur. A program focusing on strategies for clarifying values is described. The first strategy is an exercise in understanding how ambiguous the word "discipline" is, and in using value words more precisely. A demonstration is given in the second strategy on the undesirability of assuming that reactions to discipline problems are unequivocally right or wrong. Strategy number three asks teachers to rank in order, from most acceptable to least acceptable, behaviors in the classroom. In the fourth strategy, teachers are required to identify their own attitudes and feelings toward described classroom situations. Participants in these clarification sessions are asked to describe real or fictional individuals whom they consider disciplinarians. A format is presented by which teachers may examine negative feelings toward certain students with whom they are in contact. The final strategy presents a moral dilemma in a hypothetical situation and requires a reasoned solution and discussion of the values upon which the solution is based. (JD)

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VALUES AND THE SEARCH FOR DISCIPLINE - SOME STRATEGIES

The world of "discipline" and "classroom management" is, for many teachers, a world replete with confusion and conflict. Faced with such program alternatives as behavior modification, Teacher Effectiveness Training, assertiveness training, Reality Therapy, and transactional analysis; constrained by the Bill of Rights, case law, common law, due process of law, statutory law, and "higher" law; and confronted by vague, often conflicting if well-intended advice such as: "Don't smile until Christmas!" "Use power to enforce your authority and the students will retaliate by using their power!" or "Pick one and make an example of him!" - it is little wonder that "discipline" is so often cited among the most prevalent of teacher concerns. How is one to sort through the options? How can one begin to build a personal management style which is right for him or her?

One starting point is to recognize that decisions about what a teacher finds to be acceptable classroom behavior vs. unacceptable classroom behavior are value decisions. Chew gum in Mrs. Scroggy's room and you'll wind up wearing it on the end of your nose for the rest of the day. Chew gum in Mr. Scalewort's room and he'll probably ask you for a piece and join in. People tolerate different behaviors and the same person may tolerate one behavior under certain circumstances but not others. The variable is values, and unless a teacher has deliberately worked through his or her own attitudes, beliefs and feelings about discipline and shaped them into a system of responses which are consistent with his or her teaching style, they are

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likely to encounter a variety of behavioral problems which may well lead them to join, voluntarily or otherwise, the ranks of the unemployed.

Certainly there are no simple answers. The problem appears to be so overwhelming in fact, that many educators are at a loss as to where to begin. Perhaps the most logical place is with the teacher[1] and his or her own values.

Over the past few years, the author has developed several values clarification strategies which may contribute toward a teacher's clarity about discipline. Used as part of an in-service or pre-service program focusing on discipline, they often provide an avenue for the teacher to explore discipline in open, even exciting ways.[2]

STRATEGY NO. 1 "Defuzzing 'Discipline'"

This strategy is usually begun with a brief lecture on how often educators use ambiguous words and phrases to describe educational process, and that this often results in miscommunication, misapplication of ideas, arguments and sometimes even open hostility. Such phrases as "open education," "career education," "sex education," "humanistic education" and "values education," - to mention just one category - are examples of ambiguous or "fuzzy" phrases which are often open to many interpretations.

Next, the word "discipline" is written on a chalkboard, piece of newsprint, etc. with a dozen or so spokes emanating from it. The class is then asked to think of other words which might define or describe the word "discipline." One of the author's classes, for example, produced a "defuzzing wheel" which looked like this:

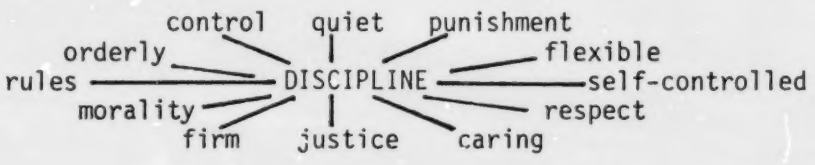

Figure 1

More spokes may be added as needed.

The activity can then be processed in any number of ways, ranging from the use of sentence stems such as "I learned . . .," "I wonder . . .," "Discipline . . .," or "I find it interesting that . . .," to quite unstructured discussions.

Two purposes are served by the defuzzing wheel strategy. First it demonstrates just how ambiguous the word "discipline" is, thus encouraging one to begin exploring alternative descriptors to the ones used by himself or herself. Second, it encourages one to be more precise in their own use of "educationalese."

STRATEGY NO. 2 "Continuums"

This strategy vividly demonstrates that there are no right or wrong answers with regard to discipline. It begins with the facilitator writing a word or phrase on a chalkboard or newsprint, drawing a continuum underneath it, and identifying the extreme ends of the continuum. One such continuum might look as follows:

the use of drugs to control
"hyperkinetic" children

. . . . . .

For (Pusher Pete) — Against (Natural Nat)

Participants are then asked to write their names on the continuum without comment in the spot which they feel best indicates their position. After four or five persons have done so, the facilitator then asks for the volunteers to verbally share their reasoning for placing themselves on the continuum as they did.

Other topics related to discipline which are ripe for use in a strategy such as this are corporal punishment, compulsory school attendance, student

smoking, dress codes, student rights and uniform discipline codes or policies.

The strategy can also be modified as to eliminate the middle part of the continuum should you feel too many persons were being "compulsively moderate" and not seriously considering the issue. You can also establish opposite walls of the classroom as the ends of the continuum and ask several persons or the whole class to actually physically place themselves in a position which best represents their position.

The continuum activity may be processed in the same manner as Strategy number 1 above or in small groups.

STRATEGY NO. 3 - "Rank Order"

Each participant is asked to rank, in order from most acceptable to least acceptable, groupings which reflect some aspect of discipline or classroom management. These may be done one-at-a-time, with large group or small group discussion intervening between each of them, or presented in their entirety and processed at the end. One such rank order might be as follows:

> If you were hiring a new teacher, which of the following criteria would you consider to be most important?
>
> ___Knowledge of his/her subject matter
> ___Beliefs about discipline
> ___Attitude towards children

Other examples include these possibilities:

> What behaviors do you find least objectionable on the part of students? Fighting, lying, cheating; whining, stealing, tattling; dozing, interrupting, masturbating; acting out, always wanting to be "first", the "best", etc., ignoring you.
>
> What behaviors do you wish your students did more of? Sharing, working independently, praising each other; acting enthusiastic, studying, doing as you say without questions; physically expressing their feelings, listening to you and each other, taking care of material objects.

Which discipline is the most serious, next most serious and so on faced by schools today? Drugs, vandalism, truancy; sexuality, physical violence, smoking.

Which classroom management approaches do you feel hold the most promise for educators? Behavior modification, T.E.T., assertiveness training; client-centered counseling, Reality Therapy, moral development education.

STRATEGY NO. 4 - "Unfinished Sentences"

The facilitator distributes a list of several sentence stems or writes them on the chalkboard or newsprint and either directs each participant to complete all of the sentences, or asks for several volunteers to orally complete them in front of the whole group. As with the previous exercises, the activity may be processed in any number of ways.

An additional processing approach is to ask each participant to "code" his or her sentences as follows:

1. Put a "dif" next to any sentences you think would have been completed quite differently five years ago;
2. Put the letter "s" next to those sentences you would be willing to share with the people in this room, and "s-" if you would be willing to share it with the people in this room, but probably not others.
3. Put "chg" next to those sentences you wish you could answer differently, i.e. you would like something to change so that you could, in turn, change your response.
4. Put "act" next to those sentences you have already acted upon or would be willing to act upon.
5. Put the symbol "+" next to those sentences you are proud of - feel happy about.

Sample sentence stems:

Discipline is . . .

Discipline should be . . .

Dress codes . . .

My classroom management problems would be solved if . . .

I wish my students were more . . . and less . . .

The kids know they can always get to me by . . .

With regard to discipline, it has always been hard for me to . . .

One thing I really do quite well in managing my classroom is . . .

Corporal punishment . . .

When someone spanks a child . . .

If a child is hyperactive . . .

The students really make my day when . . .

I think these sentences . . .

STRATEGY NO. 5 - "Ten Memorable Disciplinarians"

Using a format similar to that in Figure 2, participants are asked to list the names of at least ten persons whom they would consider to be examples of a "disciplinarian." No attempt should be made by the facilitator to define "disciplinarian" for the group, but they may be told that the individuals may be real or fictional, living or dead. After listing the names, they are coded as follows and the code marked in the appropriate box to the right of each individual name:

1. Put a "5" next to the name of any person who would not have appeared on your list five years ago.

2. Put a "T" next to those who were teachers of yours in a school setting of some kind.

3. Put a "+" next to those you feel mostly positive about, a "-" next to those you feel mostly negative about, and a "?" next to those you have mixed feelings about.

4. Put a "*" next to the names of the three most memorable disciplinarians of all.

5. Next to each of the starred names, write a key word or phrase summarizing what it is that makes the person so memorable to you.

The strategy may be processed using any of the techniques above. A particularly successful approach is to use the "I learned . . ." statement or a variation of it.

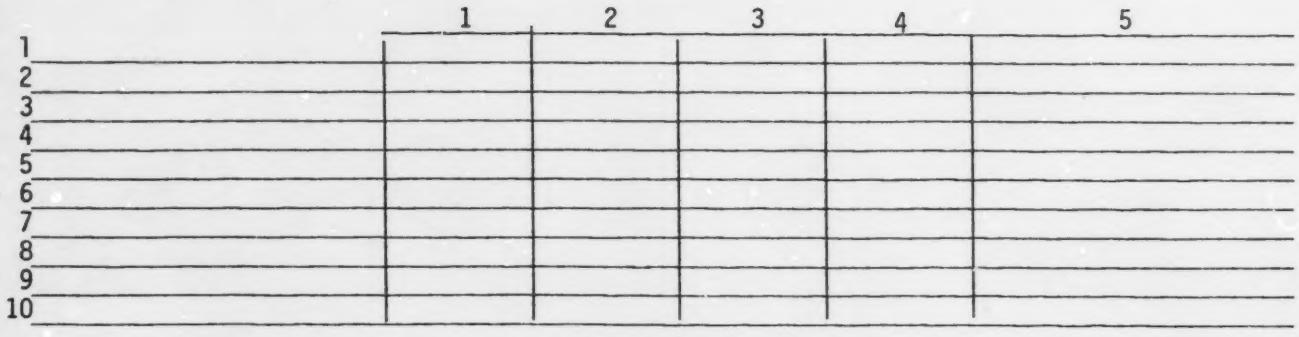

Figure 2

STRATEGY NO. 6 - "Resent - Demand - Appreciate - Validate"

This experience is slightly different than the rest, for it not only helps one clarify his or her values about discipline, but it also serves as the formula for "messages" which a teacher can send to a troublesome student.

The facilitator passes out a form similar to that in Figure 3 to each participant. The following directions are then read aloud to the group:

In the first column, list the names of ten students you know who stand out in your mind. In the second column, for at least three of the students, write a key word or phrase which best summarizes a resentment you have about something he or she does in your classroom. Try to be specific, e.g. "I resent you, Martha, for always leaving the math table without putting things away" is much more clear than "I resent you, Martha, for being so sloppy."

In the third column, next to the statements from the second column, try to think of some demand you can make of the student which would help solve your problem. Again specificity is needed. For example, "I resent you, Martha, for always leaving the math table without putting things away, and I demand that you put the materials back in their boxes, the problem sheets on the shelf, and the pencils back in the drawer before you leave it."

In column four, we try to take the perspective of the student for a moment and see things as he or she does. Martha may have some very compelling (at least to her) reasons for leaving the math center as she does. For example, we might say: "I resent you, Martha, for always leaving the math table without putting things away, and I demand that you put the materials back in their boxes, the problem sheets on the shelf, and the pencils back in the drawer before you leave it; but I do appreciate the fact that you go to the reading table right after this and that it's your favorite activity of all and you probably can't wait to get there, and that you do clean it up after you're finished."

The last column is where we try to list several other things we can validate or positively reinforce, genuinely and with feeling. Whether or not you call them "strokes", "warm fuzzies", "giving the student the time of day" or whatever, the effects are powerful. Try to think of things you like about the student as a person and, more importantly, at appropriate times share this validation with him or her throughout the day.

	Student	Resent	Demand	Appreciate	Validate
1					
2					
3					
4					
5					
6					
7					
8					
9					
10					

Figure 3

Not only can this strategy help the participant clarify a problem behavior, but it can lead to the construction of a very clear, concise and potent message that can actually be conveyed to the student(s).

The activity can be processed in triads, small groups, or with the class as a whole.

STRATEGY NO. 7 - "Jim Harper's Dilemma"

This strategy is adapted from the moral dilemma strategies utilized by Kohlberg and others.[4] It presents the participant with a hypothetical situation, and they are asked in turn about what he or she believes the central character should do.

> Adams Junior High School is located in a very progressive school district. A number of programs in the district had attracted regional and national attention. Last year, in response to considerable pressure brought on the Board of Education by a small group of parents, the district banned all forms of corporal punishment regardless of circumstance or age of the student.
>
> Jim Harper was in his first full year at Adams. He had substitute-taught in the district for several years, waiting for a job to open. When it did, he felt very fortunate to have been chosen over three hundred other candidates for it.
>
> One day during his supervisory period, as Jim was monitoring the boys' locker room he heard several loud "smacks" in succession eminate from the locker room. Thinking there might be a fight going on, he immediately entered but instead of finding two students in a brawl, he found Mort McKenney, physical education teacher, with a paddle in his hand and a student in front of him, gym shorts around his ankles. It was obvious what had happened. Jim backed out quietly and was sure that neither Mort nor the student saw him.
>
> Jim wasn't sure what to do. He agreed with the Board policy regarding corporal punishment, and if he turned Mort McKenney in, it would probably be his word against Mort's - and Mort was a tenured teacher with sixteen years experience in the district. By the same token, however, he knew that if Mr. Gunther, the Principal, thought one of his teachers was corporally punishing students, he'd "blow his stack". What should Jim do?

The above moral dilemma can serve as a discussion springboard into such issues as corporal punishment, professionalism, individual rights and responsibilities and loyalty. It is best if the facilitator tries to maintain a focus on what Jim <u>should</u> do, not what he or another person <u>would</u> do. Such a focus keeps the discussion centered on the moral issues involved.

In the event there is little disagreement amongst the group, and for example everyone feels it is very clear that Jim should report Mort, the story can be modified as follows:

A. Jim discovers that the student was being punished for stealing another student's watch, and Mort had given the student the choice of five swats with a paddle or a referral to Mr. Gunther - and the student chose to be paddled.

B. Mort is Jim's best friend and is primarily responsible for getting him his job at Adams.

Or, should the opposite occur and the class all side with not reporting Mr. McKenney, the dilemma might be modified thusly:

A. Mort McKenney has a brutal reputation and it is because of his so-called disciplinary procedures more than any other reason that the district adopted the new policy.

B. The student is Mr. Gunther's nephew, and it is possible that he may have seen Jim leaving the locker room.

The facilitator can then use questions such as these to explore the dilemma and keep the discussion focused on its moral aspects:

Does Jim have an obligation to follow a district policy whether he agrees with it or not?

Does Jim have an obligation to the student? To Mort McKenney?

From the point of view of Mr. Gunther, what should Jim do? of Mort McKenney? of the student?

Should personal loyalties affect one's obligation to an employer?

Should you always enforce a policy, even if you aren't sure if its a "good" one? If he fails to enforce the policy in this case and is discovered, should he be punished?

CONCLUSION

These are but a few of the strategies which can help teachers focus on values and the search for discipline. The creative teacher educator can quite easily construct additional strategies or moral dilemmas. Students deserve more than a "bag of tricks" to be handed to them at graduation (if they're so lucky to get even that), and certainly much more than vague, insipid and often contradictory advice. Each deserves to be presented with viable alternatives, encouraged to explore these alternatives and examine their ramifications, to choose those which seem to fit his or her own style, and to be given the freedom to try them out. The future educator cannot expect us to answer discipline problems <u>for</u> him or her, but we can help each of them discover personally satisfying responses.

NOTES

1. "Teacher" as used in this article refers to both "pre-service" and "in-service" educators.

2. For a complete list of resources available in the area of values clarification write or call the National Humanistic Education Center, 110 Spring Street, Saratoga Springs, NY 12866 (518) 587-8770.

3. Strategies 2-6 are variations on values clarification strategies contained in Sidney B. Simon, Leland W. Howe and Howard Kirschenbaum, Values Clarification: A Handbook of Practical Strategies for Teachers and Students. (revised edition, New York: Hart Publishing Co., 1978). Available through N.H.E.C., address above.

4. The method of discussion described in this strategy is adapted from Ronald E. Galbraith and Thomas M. Jones. Moral Reasoning, A Teaching Handbook for Adapting Kohlberg to the Classroom (Minneapolis: Greenhaven Press, Inc., 1976).

BIOGRAPHICAL DATA

Steve Taffee is currently Assistant Professor of Education and Student Teaching Coordinator, Department of Education, North Dakota State University. He received his Ph. D. in Curriculum and Instruction from Michigan State University in 1976. He has taught at the high school level, has written several articles in the area of values education, and has served as a consultant to a number of schools and organizations. He is a member of ATE and several other professional organizations.